



Daily Herald Photo/Patrick J. Krohn

Fifty years after witnessing death on Iwo Jima, Keith Renstrom sits in the living

room of his Orem home and shows his war memorabilia, including a secret map,

uniforms, weapons and his Purple Heart and Bronze Star medals.

Iwo memories still overwhelming

By PAT CHRISTIAN
The Daily Herald

U.S. Marine Corps gunnery sergeant who helped take the Japanese-held hill that started the sh

bons to remember the dead," Renstrom said.

lights lit up modern Marines in historic World War II uniforms



the invasion of
and Captain
phed by Assoc-
senthal. In the

background are numerous dead soldiers. Four days later Rosenthal would take the photograph of the flag raising at Iwo Jima, and it would become the most famous icon of the war.

helping to remove the hatred.

If war elsewhere for Renstrom was bad, nothing ever did match Iwo's deadliness and carnage.

There was Chief.

"I called him that because he was part American Indian," Renstrom said. "He was one of my men and I was talking to him."

"He was standing up, and I said get down and I was waiting for him to answer when he was struck."

The bullet passed through the soldier's pack and hit a spoon. The slug and spoon sped through Chief's chest splattering Renstrom with carnage.

"I actually saw him die before my eyes," he said.

Overall, Renstrom said he saw nearly 40 Americans killed before he was wounded on the 11th day

needs for the day and hearing a briefing on their daily mission.

Around 10 a.m., his group's platoon leader was killed, and Renstrom told a higher-up that he would fill in until another platoon leader was found.

Later that day, he radioed for naval guns to fire on an enemy position. "Then I saw this hand come above a rock wall above us and an enemy soldier stood up and threw a grenade."

Renstrom quickly grabbed a rifle and killed the soldier, but the grenade landed a few feet away from him and exploded.

Shrapnel ripped through his chin and other fragments lodged in his arm and within two-and-a-half inches of his heart.

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"We could see the flag, and it was toward Mount Suribachi."

Fifty years ago today, Ren-
strom looked up from his position
in Washington D.C.

The historic image was later
fashioned into a monument located
at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Associated Press photographer
Joe Rosenthal immortalized when
he photographed it on Iwo Feb.
23, 1945.

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"There was a wreath with ribbons pulled,

memories.

Then he fell prey to emotion and

for the men who gave their lives.

Composed up until the ceremony

guy I had known there."

"I kept seeing the death of

Renstrom said he remained

overwhelmed.

When a curtain was pulled,

The flag-raising reenactment

came after sunset.

Just as the sun set ... I was doing

great until the helicopter flight,

then emotions became pretty

overwhelming.

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